

**SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERIZATION OF  
 $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  DOPED  $\text{TiO}_2$  IMMOBILIZED ON  
ACTIVATED CARBON FOR DEGRADATION OF  
SINGLE AND BINARY MIXTURE OF  
METHYLENE BLUE AND METHYL ORANGE  
DYES UNDER VISIBLE LIGHT**

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**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA  
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by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Activated Carbon
Ag-GO	Silver Graphene Oxide
AOP	Advanced Oxidation Process
BET	Braunauer Emmett Teller
CB	Conduction Band
CE	Carbon Electrode
CNT	Carbon Nanotube
4-CP	4-chlorophenol
CVD	Chemical Vapor Deposition
DBD	Dielectric Barrier Discharge
DSSC	Dye Sensitized Solar Cells
DTA	Differential Thermal Analysis
DRS	Diffuse Reflectance Spectroscopy
EDX	Energy Dispersion X-ray
$e^-$	electron
$E_g$	Band gap energy
FESEM	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy
FTIR	Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy
GAC	Granular Activated Carbon
GF	Graphene Film
GO	Graphene Oxide
$h^+$	hole
JCPDS	Joint Committee on Powder Diffraction Standards

k	Pseudo-first order rate constant
LECA	Light Expanded Clay Aggregate
MB	Methylene Blue
MO	Methyl Orange
MWCNT	Multiwalled Carbon Nanotubes
NTA	Nano-tube Array
PANI	Polyaniline
pH <sub>pzc</sub>	pH of Point of Zero Charge
PoPD	poly-o-phenylenediamine
PVA	Polyvinyl Alcohol
R <sup>2</sup>	Linear Regression Coefficient
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscopy
sccm	standard cubic centimeter per minute
TEM	Transmission Electron Microscopy
TG/DTA	Thermo Gravimetric/ Differential Thermal Analysis
TTIP	Titanium (IV) tetraisopropoxide
UV	Ultraviolet
VB	Valence band
XRD	X-ray Diffraction

**SINTESIS DAN PENCIRIAN  $\text{TiO}_2$  TERDOP  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  TERPEGUN KARBON  
TERAKTIF UNTUK DEGRADASI PEWARNA TUNGGAL DAN  
CAMPURAN BINARI METILENA BIRU DAN METIL OREN DI BAWAH  
CAHAYA NAMPAK**

**ABSTRAK**

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menghasilkan fotomangkin yang mempunyai aktiviti fotomangkinan yang baik di bawah cahaya nampak. Dalam kajian ini pengubahsuaian  $\text{TiO}_2$  dilakukan dengan pemegunan ke atas 10 wt % karbon teraktif ( $\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC) dan pendopan  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  ke atas  $\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC dengan peratusan berat Fe yang berbeza (0.1, 0.5, 1% wt) di atas  $\text{TiO}_2$ -10%AC telah dijalankan menggunakan kaedah sol-gel. Kesan pendopan  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  dan pemegunan di atas AC terhadap keupayaan penyingkiran pewarna tunggal, metilena biru (MB) dan metil oren (MO), dan pewarna campuran binari MB dan MO telah dibandingkan dengan  $\text{TiO}_2$  tulen. Analisis pembelauan sinar X (XRD) telah menunjukkan bahawa saiz kristal  $\text{TiO}_2$  berkurangan daripada 56.5 kepada 24.4 nm selepas pemegunan di atas AC, sementara luas permukaan meningkat daripada 114 kepada 204  $\text{m}^2 \text{g}^{-1}$  dengan peningkatan % wt dopan. Malah, luang jalur fasa anatas  $\text{TiO}_2$  juga telah berkurangan daripada 3.15 kepada 2.8 eV apabila peratusan berat dopan  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  ditingkatkan kepada 1%. Parameter optima bagi penyingkiran pewarna tunggal MB dan MO telah ditentukan sebagai 0.10 g dos mangkin, 75 mg/L MB, 50 mg/L MO, pada pH ambien dengan masa sentuhan 2 jam. Sementara itu, parameter optima untuk pewarna campuran binari adalah pada nisbah kepekatan tinggi (mg/L) MB kepada MO (40:40) dan pH ambien dengan masa sentuhan 2 jam. Fotomangkin 1%  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y/\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC menunjukkan penyingkiran maksima sebanyak 93% bagi pewarna MB dengan kepekatan awal 75 mg/L, sementara fotomangkin 0.1%  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y/\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC

menunjukkan penyingkiran sehingga 96% bagi MO dengan kepekatan awal 50 mg/L selepas 2 jam penyinaran di bawah cahaya lampu makmal biasa. Fotomangkin 0.5%  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y/\text{TiO}_2$ -10 AC menunjukkan penyingkiran tertinggi pewarna campuran binari pada nisbah kepekatan awal 40:40 (mg/L) selepas 2 jam penyinaran dengan masing-masing 88 dan 99% MB dan MO, telah disingkirkan. Kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa pemegunan  $\text{TiO}_2$  ke atas AC menambah baik aktiviti fotomangkinan zarah nano  $\text{TiO}_2$ . Untuk meningkatkan kebolegunaan semula fotomangkin, ejen penyahjerap yang berbeza seperti  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{NaNO}_3$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ , dan  $\text{NaOH}$ , telah digunakan dan didapati  $\text{NaOH}$  adalah terbaik bagi MB sementara bagi MO keempat-empat ejen penyahjerap tidak menunjukkan aktiviti penyahjerapan yang baik. Keputusan menunjukkan fotomangkin yang dirawat boleh digunakan semula berulang kali. Walau bagaimanapun peratus penyingkiran menurun kepada 40% pada masing-masing kitaran ke-10 dan ke-3 bagi MB dan MO.



**SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERIZATION OF  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  DOPED  $\text{TiO}_2$**   
**IMMOBILIZED ON ACTIVATED CARBON FOR DEGRADATION OF**  
**SINGLE AND BINARY MIXTURE OF METHYLENE BLUE AND METHYL**  
**ORANGE DYES UNDER VISIBLE LIGHT**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to produce the photocatalyst that has good photocatalytic activity under visible light. In this study the modification of  $\text{TiO}_2$  was conducted by immobilization of  $\text{TiO}_2$  on 10% wt activated carbon ( $\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC) and  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  doping of different Fe weight percentages (0.1, 0.5, and 1% wt) on the  $\text{TiO}_2$ -10%AC using a sol-gel method. The effects of  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  doping and immobilization onto AC towards the removal efficiency of single dye methylene blue (MB) and methyl orange (MO), and binary dye mixtures of MB and MO were compared to pure  $\text{TiO}_2$ . The X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis showed that the crystallite size of  $\text{TiO}_2$  decreased from 56.5 to 24.4 nm after immobilization onto AC, while the surface area increased from 114 to 204  $\text{m}^2 \text{g}^{-1}$  as the % wt of the dopant increased. In fact, the band gap of the anatase phase of  $\text{TiO}_2$  was also reduced from 3.15 to 2.8 eV as the % wt of  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y$  dopant were increased to 1%. The optimum parameters for the removal of single MB and MO dyes were determined to be 0.10 g of the catalyst dosage, 75 mg/L of MB, 50 mg/L of MO, at ambient pH with the contact time of 2 h. Meanwhile, the parameters for the binary dyes mixture were found to be optimum at a high concentration (mg/L) ratio of MB to MO (40:40) and at ambient pH with the contact time of 2 h. The 1%  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y/\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC photocatalyst showed maximum removal of 93% for the MB dye with initial concentration of 75 mg/L, while the 0.1%  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y/\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC showed up to 96%

removal for MO with the initial concentration of 50 mg/L after 2 h of irradiation under normal laboratory light. The 0.5%  $\text{Fe}_x\text{O}_y/\text{TiO}_2$ -10% AC photocatalyst showed the highest removal of binary dye mixture at the initial concentration ratio of 40:40 (mg/L) after 2 h of irradiation where 88 and 99% of MB and MO were removed, respectively. This study revealed that the immobilization of  $\text{TiO}_2$  onto AC improved the photocatalytic activity of the material. To increase the reusability of the photocatalyst, different desorbing agents such as  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{NaNO}_3$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ , and  $\text{NaOH}$ , were used and it was found that  $\text{NaOH}$  is the best eluent for MB but for MO none of the desorbing agent shows good desorption activity. The results showed that the treated photocatalysts can be repeatedly used although the percentage of removal decreased to 40% at the 10<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycles for MB and MO, respectively.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Water is one of the most vital element on earth as there will be no life on earth if there is no water. Other than utilizing water for drinking and manufacturing of many products, water is also crucial for cooking, agricultural, and recreational purposes. However, nowadays water pollution has become one of the major source of health problems that are gaining concern around the world.

In Malaysia, residential, commercial, and industrial areas are three main sources that cause water pollution. Various wastewater containing chemicals have been discharged into the water bodies. Water pollution causes adverse effects to human and aquatic life, disturbs the balance of life and reduces the bioavailability of potable water [Yang et al., 2015]. Treatment of the polluted water system is essential to reduce the burden on rivers to supply fresh water considering the demand for clean water is growing as the number of the citizens in Malaysia increases.

### **1.2 Various types of pollutants in water**

There are various types of pollutants in water and this include organic compounds such as sythetic pesticides, antibiotics, detergents, paints, and volatile organic compounds. Most of these pollutants are toxic, have high resistant to microbial degradation, and high stability towards chemical reagents, temperature and Ph [Steng et al., 2013]. Inorganic compounds such as inorganic salts, cyanides, metals compounds, sulphates and mineral acids also affect and contaminate the water body because these compounds are not only toxic but they are also non-biodegradable. Even at low concentrations, these compounds are known to be harmful to human and many aquatic ecosystems. For example, arsenic is highly toxic

and and continuous exposure to arsenic can cause lung, bladder, and kidney cancer (Danish et al., 2013).

Textile industries are one of the major industries that discharged effluents containing large amounts of dyes into the water bodies. Dyes are normally retained in water bodies for a long time, thus contaminating the food chain and affecting animals and human health (Chakravarty et al., 2015).

### **1.3 Principles of photocatalysis**

Photocatalysis can be defined as the acceleration of a photoreaction in the presence of a catalyst (Ibhadon and Fitzpatrick, 2013). Fujishima and Honda have reported the discovery of photocatalytic splitting of water by a metal oxide photocatalyst called titanium dioxide ( $\text{TiO}_2$ ), under ultraviolet light (UV) (Fujishima and Honda, 1972). Later, Frank and Bard (1977) reported the use of  $\text{TiO}_2$  as semiconductor catalyst to decompose cyanide. Ollis and his co-workers (1986) went on further to extensively examine the ability of the heterogeneous photocatalyst to degrade organic molecules. Semiconductors are primary light absorbers widely used as photocatalysts due to their favorable combinations that include the electronic structure, excited-state lifetime, charge transport characteristics, and absorption properties (Thiruvengkatachari et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the currently available water treatment technologies such as adsorption (Foo and Hameed, 2010) or coagulation (Shi et al., 2007) merely concentrate the pollutants present by transferring them to other phase(s) however the pollutants still remain in the system and are not completely eliminated or destroyed (Chong et al., 2010). These spent adsorbents or coagulants later form a secondary waste that require further treatment after the reaction is completed. Since then, more

studies have been done by researchers on photocatalysts, which have prompted numerous and promising TiO<sub>2</sub> applications varying from photocatalysis to photo-electrochromic to sensors (Chen and Mao, 2007; Kim et al., 2010) as well as in biomedicine and cosmetics (Ramelan et al., 2017).

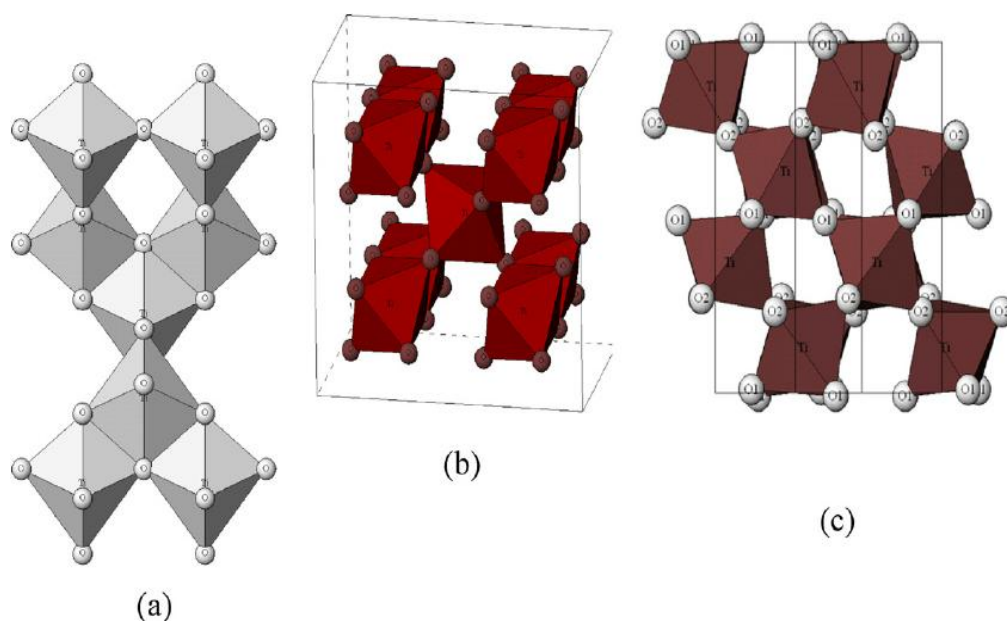
## **1.4 Titanium dioxide**

Titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) is a metal oxide semiconductor material which is naturally occur from titanium and is also known as titania. TiO<sub>2</sub> have been widely used in water treatment system because it is cheap, non toxic and readily available. Due to its outstanding electronic properties and chemical stability, photocatalytic reaction using TiO<sub>2</sub> has received huge attention for application as one of the most viable environmental cleanup technologies (Long et al., 2016; Cai et al., 2015).

### **1.4.1 Properties of titanium dioxide**

TiO<sub>2</sub> has been reported to oxidize organic compounds into harmless compounds such as CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O when irradiated by UV light (Chatterjee and Dasgupta, 2005). Besides, the photocatalytic reaction can take place at room temperature. TiO<sub>2</sub> exists in three major phases which are anatase, rutile, and brookite as shown in **Figure 1.1**. The structure of anatase and rutile is tetragonal, while brookite is an orthorhombic. Among the polymorphs of TiO<sub>2</sub>, anatase (band gap energy, 3.2 eV) has been reported to show the best photocatalytic activity compared to other forms of TiO<sub>2</sub> because of its higher electron mobility, lower density, and highly oxidizing and reducing abilities (Lan et al., 2013). Meanwhile, rutile has smaller band gap energy (3.0 eV) and faster electron-hole recombination rate which reduces its efficiency as photocatalyst (Luttrell et al., 2014). Brookite is rarely used because it is difficult to be obtained in pure form without anatase and rutile phases,

therefore its photocatalytic properties has not been much studied (Di Paola et al., 2013).



**Figure 1.1** Crystalline structures of three different polymorphs of  $\text{TiO}_2$  (a) anatase (b) rutile (c) brookite (Pelaez et al., 2012).

$\text{TiO}_2$  is considered as one of the most efficient photocatalyst for the degradation of various organic and inorganic pollutants in water. By the absorption of light energy larger or equal to the band gap of  $\text{TiO}_2$ , electrons were excited from the valence band (VB) to conduction band (CB), thus forming electron-hole ( $e^-/h^+$ ) pairs. These photogenerated charge carriers undergo recombination and become trapped in metastable states or migrate to  $\text{TiO}_2$  surface to react with adsorbed molecules (Zaleska, 2008).

In photocatalysis, hydroxyl and superoxide radicals play important roles as active reagents to degrade the pollutants by reacting with the electron-hole pairs. Based on the similar mechanism,  $\text{TiO}_2$  can reduce  $\text{CO}_2$  to  $\text{CH}_3\text{OH}$  or  $\text{H}_2$  under

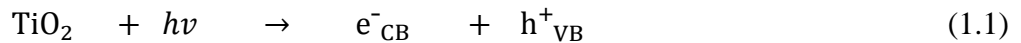
controlled environment such as in inert or oxygen free atmosphere. However, the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub> strongly depends on (Herrmann, 2005):

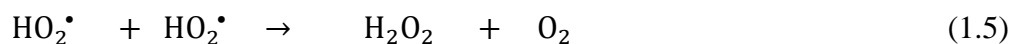
1. Light absorption properties
2. Electron-hole recombinations
3. Reduction and oxidation of semiconductor surface by the e<sup>-</sup>/h<sup>+</sup> pair

The different properties exhibited by the different TiO<sub>2</sub> polymorph is attributed to the crystal structure of the catalyst. Rutile is thermodynamically the most stable phase, although anatase is formed at lower temperature (< 800 °C). Both of these phases have been known to show photocatalytic activity. Rutile appears to be more suitable for photocatalysis applications because it can absorb light with wider range. However, the anatase phase exhibits superior photocatalytic activity than rutile due to the difference in terms of energy, structure, and the surface area (Herrmann, 2005).

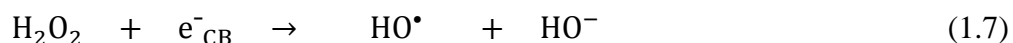
#### 1.4.2 Mechanism of photocatalysis using TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles

TiO<sub>2</sub> is a semiconductive material that acts as a strong oxidizing agent by lowering the activation energy for the decomposition of organic and inorganic substances. The mechanism of the photocatalytic reaction for TiO<sub>2</sub> are shown in the following reactions:



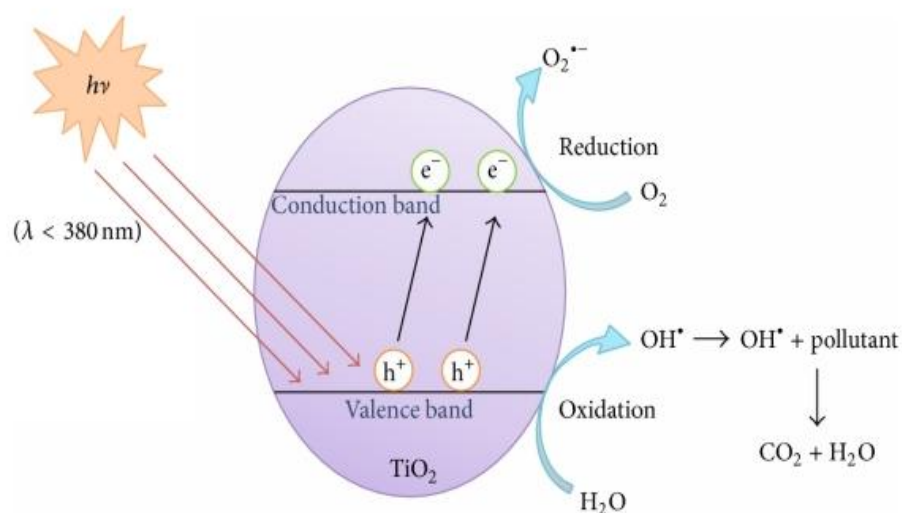


Irradiation by light with energy equals or greater than  $h\nu$  produces a hole ( $h^+$ ) in the valence band, VB and electron ( $e^-$ ) in the conduction band, CB as shown in Equation 1.1. The hole and electron react with water and oxygen to form hydroxyl radical,  $\text{HO}^\bullet$  and superoxide radical,  $\text{O}_2^{\bullet-}$  as shown in Equations 1.2 to 1.5. The formation of hydrogen peroxide ( $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ) will proceed either by undergoing photolysis (Equation 1.6) or by accepting electron (Equation 1.7) to produce hydroxyl radical,  $\text{HO}^\bullet$ . Hydroxyl radical is a strong oxidizing agent and plays an important role in photocatalysis compared to other oxidizing agents such as  $\text{O}_3$  because  $\text{HO}^\bullet$  reacts  $10^6$ - $10^{12}$  times faster to attack organic compounds (Legrini et al., 1993). An adsorbed organic compound, **D**, is a hole trapper therefore it will react with the hole,  $h^+_{\text{VB}}$  in VB (Equation 1.8).



The  $\text{TiO}_2$  photocatalytic reaction requires photo-excitation of light to separate the charge followed by the scavenging of electrons and holes on the surface of the catalyst, **Figure 1.2**.





**Figure 1.2** Schematic presentation of the mechanism of  $\text{TiO}_2$  semiconductor in heterogeneous photocatalysis (Quan et al., 2005).

## 1.5 Synthesis methods of $\text{TiO}_2$ nanoparticles

There are various methods reported by many researchers to synthesize  $\text{TiO}_2$  such as sol-gel (Leong et al., 2014), hydrothermal (Nasir et al., 2014), templating (Zi et al., 2016), and chemical vapor deposition (CVD) (Jais et al., 2016; Rizal et al., 2016). The steps involved during the preparation of the samples are very crucial because it will affect properties such as the crystal structure, the size of the nanoparticles and the morphology of the  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles (Kuwahara et al., 2011).

### 1.5.1 Sol-gel

The sol-gel method is a versatile process widely used to make ceramic materials and the major benefit of the sol-gel process is the possibility to synthesize pure hybrid organic and inorganic materials (Ciriminna et al., 2013). Sol is a colloidal suspension formed by hydrolysis and polymerization reactions of the precursors, which are usually metal organic compounds or inorganic salts such as metal alkoxides. The complete polymerization and loss of solvent will transform the

liquid sol into a solid gel phase. When the sol is cast into a mold, a wet gel is formed and converted to dense ceramic upon drying and heat treatment. If the solvent in wet gel is removed under a supercritical condition, an aerogel, a highly porous and extremely low-density material is obtained (Pierre, 2002). When the viscosity of sol is adjusted into a proper range, then the ceramic fibers can be drawn from the sol and the nanoparticles is obtained at proper condition (Hench, 1990; Owens, 2016).

Wu and co-workers (2008) have synthesized pure and vanadium (V) doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  by sol-gel method and the results showed a red shift in the UV-vis spectra and higher photocatalytic activity under visible light compared to pure  $\text{TiO}_2$ . On the other hand, Li et al. (2014) developed  $\text{La}^{3+}$  doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  by a sol-gel process and found that  $\text{La}^{3+}$  doping inhibited the phase transformation of  $\text{TiO}_2$ , enhancing the thermal stability of the  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles, thus reducing the crystallite size, and increasing the  $\text{Ti}^{3+}$  content on the surface.

### **1.5.2 Hydrothermal**

The usual hydrothermal method is conducted in a steel pressure vessel known as autoclaves and the reaction took place under controlled temperature and pressure. Hydrothermal and solvothermal method is almost similar as both methods are conducted in autoclaves. However, hydrothermal is highly dependent on the solubility of minerals in hot water because the nutrient is supplied along with water under high pressure (Kharisov et al., 2012). Hydrothermal synthesis has drawn more attention from researchers due to the well crystalline phase formed by using this method. Moreover, the nanoparticles produced have high purity and the desired shape and size of the nanoparticles can be produced by controlling the solute concentration, temperature of the reaction, reaction time and the type of the solvent used (Bae, 2013).

Li et al. (2008) and Bilgin et al. (2015) have synthesized TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles by using this method to degrade MB. Li and his co-workers (2008) synthesized Fe doped TiO<sub>2</sub> via hydrothermal method at 200 °C and this method greatly affected the TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles photocatalytic properties by increasing its activity to degrade MB. Bilgin and his co-workers (2015) also reported that the photocatalytic activity under UV irradiation was increased when TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles prepared by using sol-gel method followed by heating at 130 °C hydrothermally for 36 h.

### **1.5.3 Templating**

The synthesis of nanostructured materials using template method has become extremely popular during the last years (Zhang et al., 2010; Li et al., 2015). In order to construct materials with similar morphology of known characterized materials (templates), this method utilizes the morphological properties of the templates with reactive deposition or dissolution. Therefore, it is possible to prepare numerous new materials with regular or controlled morphology on the nano- and microscale by simply adjusting the morphology of the template material. A variety of templates have been studied for synthesizing titania nanomaterials. For example, Li and his co-workers (2015) have synthesized TiO<sub>2</sub> by using carbon nanotube (CNT) sponge as template while, Zhang et al. (2010) reported that the surface area of TiO<sub>2</sub> was enhanced when mesoporous silica KIT-6 was used as the template. However, the templated method has some disadvantages including the complicated synthetic procedures and in most cases, the templates need to be removed, normally by calcination, leading to an increase in the cost of the materials and the possibility of contamination (Zi et al., 2016).

#### **1.5.4 Chemical vapor deposition (CVD)**

Chemical vapor deposition (CVD) is a promising method to synthesize  $\text{TiO}_2$  thin films with great quality. CVD is a process where the vapor are condensed to a solid phase material forming thin film. Rizal and co-workers (2016) reported  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles in the form of a thin film on  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$  prepared via CVD method by using Ti powder as a precursor and  $\text{O}_2$  as the carrier gas. The results showed high  $\text{O}_2$  flow rates (200 sccm) strongly affected the morphology of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles and increased the roughness of  $\text{TiO}_2$  surface (Rizal et al., 2016). Besides, in the use of  $\text{TiO}_2$  thin films deposited onto a glass substrate, parameters such as flow rate, gas composition, deposition pressure and temperature are important in order to obtain  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles with higher photocatalytic activity (Jais et al., 2016; Malekshahi et al., 2013).

#### **1.6 Limitations of $\text{TiO}_2$ nanoparticles**

Eventhough  $\text{TiO}_2$  have been reported by various authors to show good photocatalytic activity (Malekshahi et al., 2013; Reszczynska et al., 2015), there are still a few limitation of  $\text{TiO}_2$  especially in water treatment technology. First, the anatase form of  $\text{TiO}_2$  has a wide band gap energy ( $E_g \sim 3.2$  eV) therefore higher energy i.e UV light is required to excite electrons to produce hydroxyl radicals for the photodegradation to take place (Leong et al., 2014). Second, the amount of UV light is only about 5 to 8% of the solar spectrum. The UV set-up is expensive and the set up is limited to small scale application for the degradation of organic and inorganic materials in real waste water (Ibhadon and Fitzpatrick, 2013). Apart from that, the electron and hole can recombine easily and this lowers the photocatalytic activity of  $\text{TiO}_2$  (Yuanjie et al., 2013). Furthermore, powdered  $\text{TiO}_2$  can easily

agglomerate into larger particles and this reduces its efficiency and hinders its practical applications. In addition, the nanosize  $\text{TiO}_2$  particles are very small making the separation after the treatment a very difficult process. All these problems restricted the use of  $\text{TiO}_2$  for the larger and wider applications. Therefore, in order to overcome these problems, research to improve its photocatalytic activity is gaining much interest from various researchers (Khan et al., 2014; Riaz et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2012).

## **1.7 Modification of $\text{TiO}_2$**

To improve the properties of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles, several modifications have been done to increase the photocatalytic activity of  $\text{TiO}_2$  semiconductor. The modification can be done by doping  $\text{TiO}_2$  with metal or non-metal, dye sensitized, hybrid nanomaterial, and also surface modification by inorganic adsorbent.

### **1.7.1 Doping with metal**

Doping of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles with transition metals have been reported to narrow the band gap and caused a redshift to the visible light region. This redshift is caused by charge transfer between the d electrons of the transition metals either with the conduction band or the valence band of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles (Teh and Mohamed, 2011). Pt doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  studied by Long et al. (2016) enhanced the photocatalytic activity by degrading 93.4% and 53.6% of MO after 1 h under solar simulator and 80 min under visible light irradiation, respectively. Previously, modification of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles via Pd doping at different wt % of Pd and different calcination temperatures restrained the anatase to rutile transformation and reduced the  $\text{TiO}_2$  grain growth (Cai et al., 2015).

Doping with  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  was preferred to be more effective because of its half-filled electronic configuration narrows the band gap and new intermediate energy levels were introduced (Liu et al., 2011). According to Ahmed et al. (2013) doping with  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  ion prevented agglomeration and produced well-defined nanocrystalline particles with high surface area thus enhancing the photocatalytic activity by enhancing the adsorption of photons and the degradation of the pollutant. Meanwhile, Giordano and his co-workers (2016) reported Li-doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  was able to reduce the  $(e^-/h^+)$  recombination rate while other researchers reported  $\text{Yb}^{3+}$  doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  was able to degrade 89% of phenol under visible light after 3 h (Reszczynska et al., 2015).

### **1.7.2 Doping with non-metal**

$\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles can also be modified with non-metal elements such as carbon (Kavitha and Devi, 2014), sulfur (Han et al., 2014), or nitrogen (Peng et al., 2008). According to Asahi et al. (2005) the mechanism of non-metal doping is different from the noble and transition metals coupling. For example, N doping introduced new states of the energy level at the valence band edge and caused the original band gap of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles to become smaller (Wang and Doren, 2005). Modification with N reduced the ratio of rutile to anatase phase thus indicating that N dopants inhibited the transformation of anatase to rutile phase (Iwase et al., 2013). N doping changed the hardness, elastic modulus, electrical conductivity and the refractive index of  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles (Peng et al., 2008). Meanwhile, C doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  showed higher photocatalytic activity towards the degradation of 4-chlorophenol (4-CP) under visible light irradiation while the undoped  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles only showed good activity under UV irradiation attributed to wide band gap of undoped  $\text{TiO}_2$ .

### 1.7.3 Hybrid nanomaterials

TiO<sub>2</sub> composites with carbon have been reported to display good results on the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub>. Various composites of TiO<sub>2</sub> precursors with carbon materials such as carbon nanotube (CNT) (Reti et al., 2014), graphene (Cheng et al., 2014) and graphene oxide (Stengl et al., 2013) have been reported. TiO<sub>2</sub> multiwalled carbon nanotube (TiO<sub>2</sub>/MWCNT) composites have been prepared via hydrolysis of Ti containing precursors adsorbed onto the MWCNT surface followed by annealing at 400 °C to change the amorphous titanium-hydroxide into crystalline nanocatalyst. TiO<sub>2</sub> with 1% wt MWCNT showed excellent degradation of phenol while the 5% wt MWCNT was very efficient for the decomposition of oxalic acid (Reti et al., 2014). Moreover, as carbon acts as photosensitizer by transferring the e<sup>-</sup> to TiO<sub>2</sub> surfaces, it helps to increase the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub> by extending to the visible light range (Akhavan et al., 2009). Meanwhile, Cheng et al. (2014) prepared graphene film (GF) decorated TiO<sub>2</sub> nano-tube array (GF/TiO<sub>2</sub>NTA) electrode by anodization, followed by electrodeposition. The authors stated that graphene in the electrode increased the charge separation and light absorption under both UV and visible lights.

Some of the recent and related studies of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles prepared based on hybrid nanomaterials and the effect following the modification are summarized in **Table 1.1**.

**Table 1.1** Some of the recent studies on hybrid TiO<sub>2</sub> nanomaterial modifications and their effects.

Modifier	Light irradiation condition	Modification effect	References
Carbon nanotube (CNT)	Fluorescent UV lamp (3×40 W); ( $\lambda > 365$ nm)	Only anatase phase produced	(Reti et al., 2014)
	Visible light ( $\lambda > 420$ nm)	Oxygen vacancies facilitated in TiO <sub>2</sub>	(Chen et al., 2011)
	Ultraviolet light (40 W); ( $320 < \lambda < 400$ nm)	Suppressed the recombination of electron-hole pairs	(Li et al., 2014)
Graphene	Xenon lamp (35 W)	Narrow the band gap of anatase to 2.8 eV	(Cheng et al., 2014)
	Xenon lamp (500 W)	High photocatalytic activity	(Zou, 2011)
Graphene oxide (GO)	Fluorescent lamp (13 W); light intensity (3.5 mW cm <sup>2</sup> ) Narva lamp (emission spectrum > 400 nm)	Hindered electron-hole recombination, exhibited excellent hydrophilic properties	(Stengl et al., 2013)
	365 nm UV light	Photocatalytic activity increased 4 times better than pure TiO <sub>2</sub>	(Dai et al., 2014)
Zinc oxide (ZnO)	365 nm UV light	Recombination rate decreased, enhanced the photocatalytic activity of TiO <sub>2</sub> enhanced	(Cheng et al., 2014)
	Visible light ( $\lambda > 420$ nm); Xenon lamp (500 W)	Enhanced light absorption, Electron transport ability increased, higher degradation efficiency	(Wang et al., 2015)
Tungsten oxide, WO <sub>3</sub>	UV light (15 W Philips UV lamp); Visible light (15 W fluorescent lamp)	Removal efficiency of MB increased	(Jaritkaun, 2016)



#### **1.7.4 Dye sensitization of TiO<sub>2</sub>**

Recently, dye sensitizers have attracted great attention from researchers as one of the promising clean method to enhance the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles under visible light irradiation. Dye sensitizer is a method in which the charge generation is done at two places which is at the semiconductor-dye interface and also in the electrolyte (Nazeeruddin et al., 2011). This method has been widely used to degrade pollutants by the incorporation of dye into TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles thus shifting the photocatalytic activity to the visible region. For example, Zyoud et al. (2011) have reported the degradation of methyl orange (MO) under solar simulator radiation by using anthocyanin as the sensitizer. Anthocyanin is a natural molecular dye that is safe to be used and no organic species were traced showing the complete mineralization of the degraded MO.

Recently, Ramelan and his co-workers (2017) reported the efficiency of dye sensitized solar cells (DSSC) increased when anthocyanin from purple sweet potato were used as photosensitizer to fabricate DSSC. Light harvesting efficiency of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles prepared from sol-gel method was improved by using ZnO as the template for TiO<sub>2</sub> photoanode in dye sensitized solar cells (DSSC) (Pham et al., 2017). Another study reported that the DSSC by N719 dye and sensitized Si/TiO<sub>2</sub> methods enhanced the removal efficiency of N719 dye as Si nanoparticles exhibited luminescent properties and converting the UV ray to the visible ray (Idriss and Ravindra, 2017).

Besides, dye sensitized TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles has received attention in the photovoltaic applications such as in photolysis of water to generate hydrogen (Hirano et al., 2000) and dye sensitized cells (O'Regan and Gratzel, 1991). The efficiency of the dye increased when the position of CB was slightly below the excited state

energy level of various dyes.  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles is the most suitable for this method due to stable photoelectrode in the photoelectrochemical cells which provides the efficiency of the photocatalyst to work well even under extreme conditions.

#### **1.7.5 Modification of $\text{TiO}_2$ by inorganic adsorbates**

$\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles also can be modified by using inorganic adsorbate such as phosphate. Phosphate modified  $\text{TiO}_2$  prepared by phosphoric acid treatment was found to significantly improve the photocatalytic activity under UV irradiation (Zhao et al., 2008). According to the authors, substrates (4-chlorophenol, phenol, and rhodamine B) were removed at higher degradation percentage. This is because the rate of the hydroxyl radicals attack was enhanced since high concentration of phosphate will produce more hydroxyl radicals thus preventing the direct hole oxidation pathway.

Brauer and Szulczewski (2014) have synthesized N doped  $\text{TiO}_2$  by sol-gel method and then fluorinated the samples at room temperature. The  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticle samples which partially contained anatase phase were tested for the decolorization of MB under visible light and the results showed that the rate of decolorization of MB totally depended on the fluoride concentration as the Ti-OH groups on the  $\text{TiO}_2$  surfaces were replaced by Ti-F bonds (Brauer and Szulczewski, 2014).

#### **1.8 Immobilization of $\text{TiO}_2$ nanoparticles**

Various materials have been used as supports for  $\text{TiO}_2$  nanoparticles in the photodegradation of pollutant in water to reduce the loss of the powdered photocatalyst after treatment, thus many studies have been done to immobilized  $\text{TiO}_2$  to overcome this problems. For example, Binaeian et al. (2017) reported  $\text{TiO}_2$  immobilized on hexagonal mesoporous silicate loaded with different concentrations

of oak gall tannin to degrade Direct Yellow 86. The analysis showed that TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles immobilized on the tannin loaded mesoporous silicate surface were distributed well without aggregation. In addition, Eddy et al. (2015) have reported that silica improved the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles by increasing the thermal stability, enhancing the surface area and also providing good sedimentation.

Besides silica, activated carbon (AC) has been shown to improve the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles (Auta and Hameed, 2011). AC also termed as activated charcoal or activated coal is an amorphous solid carbon derived from carbonaceous source or from plant. AC also shows good synergistic effect by bringing a higher concentration of pollutants in close proximity to the titania active sites and in contact with the hydroxyl radicals for effective photodegradation effect (Sun et al., 2016). Besides, the intermediate formed during degradation will be adsorbed by AC which then undergoes further oxidation (Wang et al., 2009). TiO<sub>2</sub> modified with granular AC (GAC) was used to remove humid acid under UV irradiation (Orha et al., 2016). In photocatalytic degradation, pollutants such as textile dyes were mineralized into nitrate, chloride, and sulfate anions (Mahmoodi et al., 2011).

Polymers such as polyaniline (PANI) and polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) have also been used to immobilize TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles due to their chemical resistance, low density, high durability, and cost effective benefit. For example, Lei et al. (2012) reported that only small amounts of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles were loss after 25 cycles when TiO<sub>2</sub> were immobilized on PVA. This was attributed to the strong chemical bonds between PVA and TiO<sub>2</sub> which enhanced the potential of the photocatalyst. Meanwhile, PANI has received great interest among researchers because of its high

charge carriers mobility, high absorption in the visible region, cheap, and excellent environmental stability. PANI acted as a support as well as a sensitizer which explained the higher photocatalytic activity compared to TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles alone (Yu et al., 2012).

### **1.9 Regeneration of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles**

The reusability study of TiO<sub>2</sub> to increase the usage of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles has gained great concern from various researchers by using H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (Gandhi et al., 2012), dielectric barrier discharge (DBD) (Tang et al., 2013), pH solution (Hu and Shipley, 2013) and thermal process (Miranda et al., 2014). For example, Gandhi et al. (2012) reported that TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles can be regenerated by using H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. The results showed the degradation of phthalic acid remained the same and the values of the rate constants in second and third cycles are almost similar to the fresh catalyst indicating that the activity of the TiO<sub>2</sub> catalyst could be completely restored (Gandhi et al., 2012). However, low amounts of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> was reported to cause less hydroxyl radical formation while an excessive amount of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> will act as scavange radical (Collivignarelli et al., 2017) which decreased the photocatalytic activity of the nanoparticles.

Dielectric barrier discharge (DBD) is one of the techniques that are able to regenerate of TiO<sub>2</sub>. The degradation of phenol increased and can be reused up to four cycles (77%) due to the reaction of TiO<sub>2</sub> with the phenol on the granular Activated Carbon (GAC). This hybrid material is more beneficial because the available active site from TiO<sub>2</sub> and GAC provided higher chances to increase the removal efficiency of phenol (Tang et al., 2013).

Regeneration by photocatalytic oxidation of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles has also gained attention as one of the technique to improve the usage of the spent adsorbent. Previously, Liu et al. (2014) reported that zeolite/TiO<sub>2</sub> composite was easily regenerated thus avoiding the production of secondary waste to be treated. The zeolite/TiO<sub>2</sub> synthesized by sol-gel method were tested for the photodegradation for the removal of humic acid and regeneration of the composite. From the photocatalytic oxidation reaction, it was proven that even after five cycles of treatment, there was no significant decrease in the efficiency of zeolite/TiO<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles coating on zeolite remains throughout the photocatalysis and the regeneration process (Liu et al., 2014).

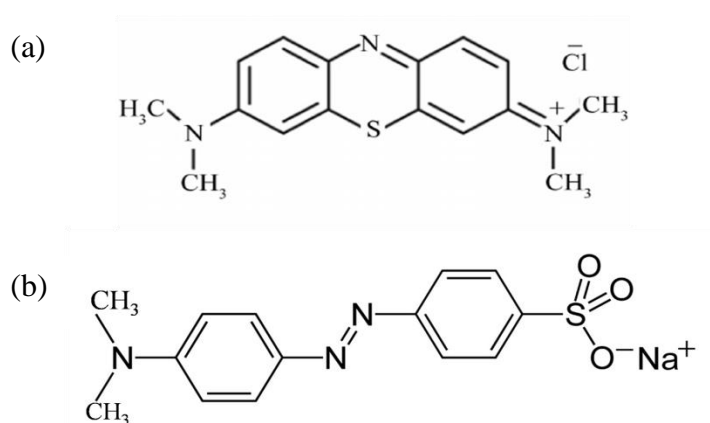
Another way to regenerate TiO<sub>2</sub> is by adjusting the pH. Hu and Shipley (2013) reported that even after the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle, more than 90% of the metals ions (Pb<sup>2+</sup>, Cu<sup>2+</sup>, and Zn<sup>2+</sup>) can be degrade when the pH of the solution was pH 2. Chieng and his co-workers (2015) reported the regeneration efficiency using different eluents followed the trend of NaOH > HNO<sub>3</sub>  $\approx$  H<sub>2</sub>O. The regeneration of AC using nitric acid showed similar removal efficiency (between 45 to 43%) for cycles 1 and 2 which was then reduced further to 24% in the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle. The regeneration by distilled water and nitric acid are almost similar as the removal efficiency decreased from 45 to 20%.

Miranda et al. (2014) compared the regeneration efficiency between thermal process and alkaline treatment (Miranda et al., 2014). The authors have reported thermal process as the best method to regenerate TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles because it was able to degrade most of the contaminants (i.e caffeine, acetaminophen, ibuprofen and ketorolac).

Shavisi et al. (2014) have studied the removal efficiency of ammonia and reported the regeneration of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles immobilized on light expanded clay aggregate (TiO<sub>2</sub>/LECA) in four steps. Firstly, TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles was washed with water followed by aeration to remove and separate the weak pollutant adsorbed onto the LECA pores. The vital step in this study was when ammonia was removed by soaking the catalyst granules in NaCl solution for 3 h and heating at 250° C. The authors were able to reuse the TiO<sub>2</sub>/LECA up to three cycles for the degradation of ammonia in petrochemical wastewater.

### 1.10 Methylene blue and methyl orange as model pollutants

Methylene blue (MB) and methyl orange (MO), **Figure 1.3**, were used as model pollutants in this study. MB is synthetic basic dye and widely known as a cationic dye. Exposure to MB can lead to health problems such as cyanosis, shock, jaundice and tissue necrosis (Afsaneh et al., 2016).



**Figure 1.3** The molecular structures of (a) methylene blue (b) methyl orange.

MB is widely used in medicine, pharmaceuticals, analytical chemistry and dye industries (Kumar and Kumaran, 2005; El-Ashtoukhy and Fouad, 2015). Meanwhile, MO is an azo dye and extensively used in textile, leather, paper industries and

sometimes in food preparation (Goh et al., 2010). MO has been reported to cause hypersensitivity, allergy and is known to be highly mutagenic and carcinogenic to human (Trandafilovic et al., 2017). The properties of both MB and MO are summarized in **Table 1.2**.

**Table 1.2** Properties of methylene blue and methyl orange (PubChem Compound database)

Properties	Methylene blue	Methyl orange
Appearance	Dark blue	Dark orange
Molecular formula	$C_{16}H_{18}ClN_3S$	$C_{14}H_{14}N_3NaNO_3S$
Molecular weight ( $g\ mol^{-1}$ )	319.85	327.33
pKa	3.8	3.4
Solubility in water ( $g\ mL^{-1}$ )	0.044	0.005
Density ( $g\ mL^{-1}$ )	0.98	1.28

In the past, most studies related to the removal of MB and MO using  $TiO_2$  nanoparticles was conducted at lower concentrations (5-50 mg/L) (Ahmed et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2015) and as single pollutant (Harikishore, 2014), **Tables 1.3** and **1.4**. In most of the previous reports the concentration of the dye used were low i.e 3 to 50 mg/L, while most of the reported literature used UV light source.

**Table 1.3** Summary of the studies on the removal of Methylene blue using TiO<sub>2</sub> in reported literature

Type of dyes	Catalyst	Light Source(s)	Initial dye concentration (mg/L)	Removal efficiency (%)	References
Methylene blue	Ag doped TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp	5	81	Harikishore, 2014
	TiO <sub>2</sub> /AC	UV lamp (250 W)	25	80	Cifci, 2016
	TiO <sub>2</sub> /PANI	UV lamp (15 W)	16	70	Ramli et al., 2014
	TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp	33	17	Mainya et al., 2013
	TiO <sub>2</sub> /AC	UV lamp (15 W)	15	98	Ramli et al., 2014
	Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> /TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp	3	95	Ahmed et al., 2013
	F-TiO <sub>2</sub>	Visible light	25	97	Liu et al., 2017
	TiO <sub>2</sub> -SiO <sub>2</sub>	Solar lamp (9 W)	50	70	Joseph and Elilarasi, 2017
	Sulfosalicylic acid TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp	15	70	Asadollah and Ali, 2017
	TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV-LED (365 nm)	15	92	Zulmajdi et al., 2017
	CdS/TiO <sub>2</sub>	Xenon lamp (35 W)	10	85	Makama et al., 2016
	PoPD	Xenon lamp (1000 W)	10	90	Yang et al., 2017



**Table 1.4** Summary of the studies on the removal of Methyl orange using TiO<sub>2</sub> in reported literature

Type of dyes	Catalyst	Light Source(s)	Initial dye concentration (mg/L)	Removal efficiency (%)	References
Methyl orange	TiO <sub>2</sub> /ZnO/GO	Xenon lamp (450 W)	50	44	Ramesh et al., 2017
	TiO <sub>2</sub> /anthocyanin	Lutron LX-102 (0.0212 W/cm <sup>-2</sup> )	5	95	Zyoud et al., 2011
	TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp	33	20	Mainya et al., 2013
	TiO <sub>2</sub> (using triboelectric nanogenerator)		20	76	Yuanjie et al., 2013
	Ag doped TiO <sub>2</sub>		15	99	Cifci, 2016
	PVA/TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp (300 nm)	15	73	Lei et al., 2012
	TiO <sub>2</sub> /CNT	UV lamp (254 nm)	10	80	Park et al., 2013
	Cu doped TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp (350 nm, 250 W)	50	40	Yang et al., 2015
	Si/TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp (4 W)	50	68	Mohammad et al., 2017
	Au/TiO <sub>2</sub>	UV lamp (8 W)	15	100	Silija et al., 2013

### **1.11 Problem statements**

Eventhough, TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles have many advantages for photocatalytic removal of organic and inorganic pollutants, there exist several drawbacks that limit the use of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles for large scale water treatment technology. The wide band gap of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles requires UV light irradiation which is expensive, requires special set-up and is limited to small volume of wastewater, while visible light is cheaper and in abundance. In addition to that, the fast e<sup>-</sup>/h<sup>+</sup> pair recombination rate reduced the photocatalytic activity of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles. The small nanosized of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles are easily lost during separation process thus the reusability of the photocatalysis is worth exploring. Most of the existing literature available reported the degradation of single pollutant. In real life, pollutants exist as a mixture and the volume of waste water are very large. Therefore, this study aims to improve the removal efficiency of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles so that the application can be applied under visible light which is abundant as well as considering binary dye mixture at higher dye concentration, to reflect real industrial effluents which normally exist as a mixture of different types of pollutants.

### **1.12 Research objectives**

- 1) To synthesis a visible light active TiO<sub>2</sub> photocatalyst via Fe doping and immobilization on AC.
- 2) To evaluate the effect of various parameters and compare the degradation and regeneration efficiencies of pure and modified TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles towards single MB, MO, and the binary dye mixture.
- 3) To investigate the reusability of the modified and unmodified TiO<sub>2</sub> materials.